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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes an analysis of information needs among 42 state directors of special education and other state education agency (SEA) staff. Areas identified as moderate to strong needs for further information include: assistive technology, discipline and behavior management, early childhood, finance, Individualized Education Programs, least restrictive environments, outcomes and accountability, procedural safeguards, and rules and regulations. Needs most frequently cited across three different information sources were personnel development, compliance and monitoring, special populations, procedural safeguards, inclusion, early childhood, and finance. Brief discussions of topic areas of great information need are provided. An appendix offers a synthesis of SEA information needs. (PB)

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IDENTIFICATION OF INFORMATION NEEDS OF STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

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ABSTRACT

Project FORUM, a contract funded by the Office of Special Education Programs of the U.S. Department of Education and located at the National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE) carries out a variety of activities that provide information needed for program improvement and that promote the utilization of research data and other information for improving outcomes for students with disabilities. The project also provides technical assistance and information on emerging issues, and convenes small work groups to gather expert input, obtain feedback, and develop conceptual frameworks related to critical topics in special education.

This report summarizes an analysis of information needs of state directors of special education and other state education agency staff related to policy and programmatic directions aimed at improved outcomes for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities. This needs analysis conducted by Project FORUM was performed to assist OSEP in carrying out its responsibilities related to information communication and linkages of information to changes in policies and practices. The work conducted builds on previous FORUM work and will be utilized in further work by FORUM in its current contract with OSEP.

IDENTIFICATION OF INFORMATION NEEDS OF STATE EDUCATION AGENCIES

INTRODUCTION

Background

Identification, collection, dissemination, and analysis of information is of critical importance to on-going decision making and policy development. Section 618(c)(3) of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires the Department of Education to undertake activities to "identify implementation issues, desired improvements, and information needed by State and local agencies to achievement such improvement..." The Secretary of Education is directed to develop and implement "a process for the on-going identification of national program information needed for improving the management, administration, delivery, and effectiveness of programs and services under the Act." The process is to be conducted in cooperation with state education agencies (SEAs) to insure broad Statewide input.

To meet these requirements, OSEP has a number of investments that provide technical assistance and information to the field, including the following:

- The National Information Center for Children and Youth With Disabilities
- National Clearinghouse on Postsecondary Education of Disabled Individuals
- National Clearinghouse for Professions in Special Education
- ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabled and Gifted Children
- National Clearinghouse for Children with Deaf-Blindness
- National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Systems
- Minority Outreach Center at Hampton Institute
- Technical Assistance to State Education Agencies
- Minority Outreach Center at the University of New Mexico
- Exceptional Children Assistive Center
- Center for Public Options in Special Education
- National Center on Educational Outcomes
- Secondary Transition Intervention Effectiveness Institute
- The National Finance Center
- National Center on Educational Outcomes
- Special studies conducted by COSMOS Corporation
- The Federal and Regional Resource Centers
- The National Information Action Center
- Project FORUM at NASDSE

All of these projects have on-going information generation and dissemination responsibilities. Several of these OSEP-supported projects are particularly focused on SEAs.

For example, in 1993, The National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), through its National Information Action Center (NIAC), conducted a survey of 42 states to identify the information needs of state directors of special education. This study analyzed both the likelihood of needing the information in the next two years and the impact that access to this information would have on the performance of SEAs.

COSMOS Corporation also conducted a study to analyze the adequacy of OSEP-funded technical assistance projects (called Mid-level Disseminators or MLDs, for purposes of this study) to support improvements in instructional practice (Gwaltney, et al., 1991). Among other findings, this study concluded that SEA personnel and others involved in the development of new instructional practices are familiar with only a few of OSEP's MLDs, and they do not know how to access many of these resources. Not surprisingly, this study also concluded that information and technical assistance for SEA needs change over time, and that the sources of information differ depending on the needs. Diverse professional networks were reported to be the most valuable and most frequently used information communication mechanism.

The COSMOS study also found that needs for specific information are dynamic and impacted by forces such as those stemming from the political platform of gubernatorial or chief state school officer elections; requests from LEAs for policy interpretations, model programs, and staff development; activities related to newly enacted state legislation; activities generated by the state special education unit; and inquiries made by parent or parent advocates for IEP meetings, appeals, and steering committees.

The Federal and Regional Resource Centers have a significant information and technical assistance function and respond to specific requests from the State Education Agencies. In some cases, specific requests for technical assistance have imbedded within them requests to identify, obtain, and analyze needed information.

Project FORUM at NASDSE maintains a proactive capability to respond to requests from OSEP and SEAs for information concerning state and local education agencies' status with respect to current and emerging trends and issues related to the implementation of the IDEA. To facilitate this process, Project FORUM convened a series of three stakeholder meetings in the Fall of 1992 to obtain input into the design of an information needs identification process. A marketing model was selected as the primary approach to information needs identification and analysis. This model involved using the strategy of polling "real" stakeholders, (e.g., Federation for Children with Special Needs, Chicago Public Schools, and the ARC) not just "experts", to find out what they perceive to be their information needs. A polling panel was initiated in March 1993 that participated in two rounds of a Delphi process to prioritize identified needs.

The results of this process identified the following information priorities: Accountability for Outcomes, Personnel Development, and the Role of Special Education in Reform. As a result of this process it was also concluded that the integration of or knowledge available from OSEP supported research and information projects by State and local special education decision makers has not been fully realized. It was recommended that strategies should be implemented to facilitate the timely and meaningful exchange of information between OSEP's knowledge producers and the State and local administrators who are applying this knowledge to improving education programs serving infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

Purpose

The purpose of this current activity is to build on the previous work of NIAC, the RRCs, Project FORUM, and other federally supported projects identifying information needs of state directors of special education and other SEA staff. Specifically, information needs gathered from three sources were tabulated and analyzed in order to identify similarities and trends in identified SEA information needs.

This work is intended to assist the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in meeting the Secretary of Education's mandate to develop and implement processes for on-going program facilitation by information need identification.

IDENTIFICATION OF SEA INFORMATION NEEDS

Overall Study Procedure

Information needs of state directors of special education and their SEA staff were identified utilizing the three information sources summarized below.

1. The Critical Information Needs of State Directors of Special Education (1993) is a report developed by the NIAC at NASDSE. This report contains the results of a NASDSE survey of 42 states on the information needs of state directors of special education. Responses to 97 predetermined critical information needs statements were tabulated, recorded, averaged and reported across all states, in large and small state categories, and also by geographic region. In particular, the survey assessed both the likelihood of needing the information in the next two years and the potential impact of this information on the performance of SEAs.

2. The second source examined was the monthly summaries of the Issues Tracking Database maintained by FORUM at NASDSE. Each month, a summary of information requests received by NASDSE staff is compiled and reported. Information requests were examined and summarized for the July 1993 to October 1994 period. Thus, only those requests from state directors of special education and other SEA staff were included in this analysis.

3. The final source of information requests examined were those reported in the latest quarterly reports of the federally-funded Regional Resource Centers. The quarterly reports, obtained from each of the six RRCs, summarize information requests and the latest technical assistance activities with SEAs. Each technical assistance agreement reflected some type of information needs identified by the state director of special education or other SEA staff.

Once the information needs were summarized, similarities and trends across the three sources were synthesized and categorized using three criteria. Information needs appearing across all three sources were also summarized.

Summary Analysis of Information Needs

Information needs from each source were examined and synthesized into the following summary (Table 1). As can be seen by Table 1, information requests across the three sources fell into 29 topic areas. Table 1 indicates with a check (√) the extent to which the topic area appeared across the three sources. Most of these topics are further delineated by sub-topic in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the information needs of state directors of special education and other SEA personnel.

TABLE 1: SEA INFORMATION NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY THREE SOURCES			
Area of Need	**Critical Info. Needs NASDSE (a)**	**Issues Tracking Database FORUM (b)**	**Regional Resource Centers (c)**
Assistive Technology	✓	✓	✓
Categories/Eligibility	•	✓	✓
Compliance/Monitoring	✓	✓	✓
Cultural & Linguistic Diversity	✓	✓	✓
Discipline/Behavior Management	✓	✓	✓
Early Childhood	✓	✓	✓
Evaluation/Assessment	✓	✓	✓
Extended School Year	•	✓	✓
Finance	✓	✓	✓
IEPs (Individualized Education Programs)	✓	✓	✓
Inclusion/Least Restrictive Environment	✓	✓	✓
Instruction	•	✓	✓
Interagency agreements/Collaboration	•	✓	✓
Legislation/Legal Issues (info. on recent state/fed. legislation)	•	✓	✓
Outcomes/Accountability	✓	✓	✓
Parent/Family Involvement	•	✓	✓
Personnel/CSPD	✓	✓	✓
Procedural Safeguards	✓	✓	✓
Reform/Restructuring	✓	•	✓
Related Services	•	✓	✓
Rules/Regulations	✓	✓	✓
SEA Management/Policy	•	✓	✓
Separate State-run Schools (state residential schools, schools for blind/deaf pops)	•	✓	✓
Special Populations	✓	✓	✓
Staff Development for SEAs (general staff development activities/ resources for SEA staff, incld. issues re: provision of TA to LEAs)	✓	•	✓
State Plan (issues re: development, revision & compliance of state plans)	•	•	✓
Student Services (teacher support teams for pre-referral & staff assistance purposes)	•	✓	✓
Technology	✓	•	✓
Transition	✓	•	✓

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FURTHER ANALYSIS OF INFORMATION NEEDS

Analysis of Findings

Table A.1, found in appendix A, provides a detail synthesis of SEA information needs across the three study sources. Using this information, Project FORUM staff analyzed the strength of the reported information needs of state directors of special education and their staffs using the following three criteria; areas of moderate to strong needs, needs reflected by strong presence, and strongest needs or most to least frequently cited need. The strength of information needs in any one topic area varied somewhat by source. An examination of the tallied responses provide a general picture of the strength and consistency of information needs for topic areas.

Areas of Moderate To Strong Needs

The following use of 12 information areas were indicated as moderate or strong across all three sources (at least two needs were identified by each of the three information sources):

- Assistive Technology
- Compliance and Monitoring
- Discipline and Behavior Management
- Early Childhood
- Finance
- Individualized Education Programs
- Inclusion or Least Restrictive Environment
- Outcomes/Accountability
- Personnel and Comprehensive System of Personnel Development
- Procedural Safeguards
- Rules and Regulations
- Special Populations

Needs Reflected by Strong Presence

While need strength across all three sources does reflect a consistency across the sources, it is only one method of analyzing the essential information needs of state directors of special education or other SEA staff. Because the NASDSE Critical Information Needs report based needs assessment exclusively on predetermined need statements, its lack of high numbers is not necessarily indicative of a lack of information need for the topic or sub-

topic. Significant information needs can be reflected by the strong presence (at least three needs in the topic area in at least two of the information sources). Using this technique, the following 18 information needs were found to reflect a strong presence:

- Assistive Technology
- Categories/Eligibility
- Cultural & Linguistic Diversity
- Discipline/Behavior Management
- Early Childhood
- Evaluation and Assessment
- Extended School Year
- Finance
- Inclusion/Least Restrictive Environment
- Instruction
- Interagency Agreements and Collaboration
- Procedural Safeguard
- Legislation and Legal Issues
- Outcomes and Accountability
- Reform and Restructuring
- Related Services
- Rules, Regulations
- Staff Development
- Transition

Strongest Needs or Most to Least Frequently Cited Need

Another method of examining need strength is to tally the total number of information need requests in any one topic area across all three information sources. The following list summarizes the combined number of information needs as identified in the NASDSE Critical Information Needs, the Issues Tracking Database, and the RRC Reports. The list ordered from strongest, most cited topic area to least cited.

- Personnel/Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (69)
- Compliance/Monitoring (55)
- Special Populations (44)
- Procedural Safeguards (41)
- Inclusion/Least Restrictive Environment (37)
- Early Childhood (37)
- Finance (31)
- Reform/Restructuring (28)

- SEA Management/Policy (28)
- Transition (23)
- Rules/Regulations (21)
- Cultural & Linguistic Diversity (21)
- Discipline/Behavior Management (21)
- Staff Development (19)
- Instruction (18)
- Assistive Technology (17)
- Interagency Agreements/Collaboration (16)
- Outcomes/Accountability (15)
- Individualized Education Programs (13)
- Parent/Family Involvement (13)
- Evaluation/Assessment (13)
- Technology (13)
- Related Services (11)
- Categories/Eligibility (10)
- Legislation/Legal Issues (10)
- Separate State-Run Schools (6)
- Student Services (6)
- State Plan (5)
- Extended School Year (4)

DISCUSSION OF STRONG INFORMATION NEEDS ACROSS THREE SOURCES

Issues related to **Compliance and Monitoring, Early Childhood, Finance, Inclusion and LRE, Personnel and CSPD, and Procedural Safeguards and Special Populations** were all identified as topic areas of great information need by state directors of special education/SEA staff. These topic areas were identified by all the three resources as well as being rated often.

Personnel/Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development (CSPD)

Issues relating to **Personnel** and implementation of the **Comprehensive Systems of Personnel Development** were the most frequently identified information needs of state directors of special education and other SEA staff. Again, a great deal of variation is evident from the range of personnel information needs. Many states indicated the need for assistance with developing and implementing CSPD plans. Information regarding strategies to address personnel supply and demand needs, as well as information regarding certification, endorsements and personnel standards were also reported. Further,

information on use of paraprofessionals and other support staff was noted across sources, and various training and personnel preparation needs were also identified. The sheer volume of information needs relating to Personnel and CSPD issues reflects the importance of these issues to state directors of special education and their staff.

Compliance and Monitoring

Specifically, within the topic area of **Compliance and Monitoring,** State directors of special education/other SEA staff identified the following as high need areas: SEA monitoring of LEAs, improving OSEP monitoring of SEAs, and assisting SEAs prepare for, respond to, or make revisions as a result of OSEP monitoring. The concerns of SEA staff regarding compliance and monitoring procedures and practices, both at a federal and a state level, greatly impact the perceived information needs ratings.

Early Childhood

An examination of the **Early Childhood** sub-topic information needs reveals great diversity. Issues varied greatly from service delivery to transition issues to funding and staff development needs. Clearly, the identified information needs in this topic area reflects the great variety of topics with which professionals wrestle in efforts to provide opportunities for appropriate delivery of services to infants, toddlers and young children with disabilities.

Finance

Information needs relating to **Finance** and funding dealt with issues of accessing and distributing funds. State directors of special education and other SEA staff requested information on the use of SSI and Medicaid for funding the cost of special services. Additionally, information on alterations to the funding formula used by SEAs to provide funds to LEAs was also sought.

Individualized Education Programs

Information needs regarding **Individualized Education Programs** were extremely diverse, thus preventing sub-topic categorization. Examples of the identified information needs include identification of model programs demonstrating successful procedures and guidelines for IEP development, provision of technical assistance materials on compliant and effective IEPs, and development of IEP evaluations for use by LEAs. The great variety of

IEP information needs cited by state directors of education and other SEA staff indicates that while IEPs have remained a consistent part of the IDEA procedural requirements, many issues regarding their appropriate use and content have yet to be resolved.

Inclusion and LRE

Data from all sources indicated that state directors of special education and other SEA staff need more information related to efforts to include more students with disabilities into general education settings. The greatest need was in the area of model inclusion programs, guidelines and policy other information needs included definitions of **Inclusion and LRE,** effects of inclusion, staff development and training and planning for inclusive programming. As efforts to increase inclusionary activities move forward, the needs of state directors of special education and SEA staff to access model programs, guidelines and policy statements will likely grow and change with experience.

Procedural Safeguards

Another identified topic area of information need was **Procedural Safeguards.** Information needs on mediation, Section 504 and ADA requirements, issues regarding hearing officers, parents' rights and surrogate parents' training are significant to state directors of special education and other SEA staff. It is clear that state directors of education and SEA staff would like information on alternative methods of meeting their procedural safeguard requirements. Moreover, the need for clarification of Section 504 and ADA requirements is evident.

Special Populations

The final area that state directors of education and staff identified often and across sources as an information need is **Special Populations.** This is a diverse topic area and includes a variety of sub-topic information needs. Issues involving attention deficit disorders, autism, hearing impairments, learning disabilities, serious emotional disorders, special health care needs and chronically ill populations, traumatic brain injury, visual impairments, residential populations, incarcerated and adjudicated populations, rural populations and issues relating to substance abuse were all noted. State directors of special education and other SEA staff require specific information regarding the varied types of disabilities and conditions present in the nation's schools.

SUMMARY

Project FORUM conducted an analysis of the information needs of state directors of special education and other SEA staff by analyzing three OSEP-funded sources: the **1992 Critical Information Needs of State Directors of Special Education** developed by the National Information Action Center at NASDSE, the **Issues Tracking Database** maintained by Project FORUM, and **quarterly** reports from the Regional Resource Centers which summarize current technical assistance activities being carried out for SEAs. Table 1 provides a summary of information needs across these three sources with information requests placed into 29 content topic areas. Most of the topic areas were further delineated by sub-topic to provide more detailed information regarding needs which is found in Table A.1.

The information needs were categorized three different ways: those that were indicated as being moderate or strong (or at least two needs identified in each of the three information sources); those which reflected a strong presence (at least three needs in the topic area in two of the three information sources); and those needs that were the strongest (most cited needs ordered from the most to least frequently noted). Finally, brief descriptions were provided for the following needs that were found to be high needs across the three sources as well as being rated often: Compliance and Monitoring, Early Childhood, Finance, Inclusion and LRE, Personnel and CSPD, Procedural Safeguards, and Special Populations.

This information needs analysis will be utilized in subsequent FORUM work in an effort to assist OSEP in developing and implementing a process for on-going program enhancement through the identification, dissemination/obtaining, analysis, and use of information. It is important to keep the COSMOS study finding in mind that needs for specific information by SEAs are dynamic and impacted by a variety of political, organizational and programmatic forces at the federal, state and local levels. These rapid changes will warrant ongoing, flexible and dynamic ways of updating and meeting SEA information needs.

APPENDIX A

Table A.1: Synthesis of SEA Information Needs Across Three Sources

TABLE A.1: Synthesis of SEA Information Needs Across Three Sources			
Topic Area	Critical Info. Needs NASDSE (a)	Issues Tracking Database FORUM (b)	Regional Resource Centers (c)
Assistive Technology			
- Funding/availability of/ access to AT	2/3	2	3/6 (3)
- Guidelines/policy	2/3	0	3/6 (3)
- Training/networking	0	0	2/6 (3)
Categories/Eligibility			
- Determination of/eligibility for specific disability categories	0	2	3/6 (3)
- Gen'l concerns re: eligibility & defs. of overall categories	0	4	0
- Use of Developmental Delay category for 3-5 year olds	0	1	0
Compliance/Monitoring			
- Issues re: SEA monitoring of LEAs	3/5	2	5/6 (14)
- Issues re: improving OSEP monitoring of SEA Assist SEA prepare for, respond to, or make revisions as result of OSEP monitoring of SEA	1/2 0	5 2	4/6 (4) 4/6 (12)
- Assist w/ SEA products, ex. compliance & review manual	0	1	1/6 (1)
- Recent final SEA monitoring reports from OSEP	0	0	2/6 (4)
- Issues re: monitoring of corrections	0	0	1/6 (3)
Cultural & Linguistic Diversity			
- Instruction/programs for students w/dis. who have cult. & ling. differences	0/1	0	2/6 (2)
- Policy/guidelines/assessment	0	1	1/6 (3)
- Teacher training/staff development/networking	0	0	2/6 (4)
- Materials in non-English	0	1	1/6 (2)
- Issues re: overrepresent. of culturally-diverse pops in spec. ed.	0	2	2/6 (5)
Discipline/Behavior Management			
- Interventions/techniques to manage behavior of aggressive, violent students (disabled or not)	1/1	2	3/6 (4)
- Issues re: suspended/expelled students	0/1	1	1/6 (1)
- Staff development/training	0	0	3/6 (3)
- Other policy issues - Discipline Amendments	0	7	1/6 (1)
Early Childhood			
- Issues re: transition b/w Parts H & B	0	0	3/6 (5)
- Agency collaboration	0	2	3/6 (5)
- Funding issues incld. use of presch. grants for 0-3s	0/2	1	0
- Instructional/program issues	0	1	1/6 (1)
- Services to culturally & geographically-diverse pop	0/2	0	0
- Inclusion/integration	0/1	0	1/6 (1)
- Training/staff dev./networking	0	1	5/6 (8)
- Other service issues - Assessment	0/1	1	4/6 (5)
Evaluation/Assessment			
- Practices in student eval incld. use of alternative assessments & Multidisciplinary Assessments	1/1	1	3/6 (3) 0
- Initial diagnostic student assessment	0	1	0
- 3-year reevaluations	0	0	0
- Placement issues	0	0	0
- Accommodation issues	0	3	0
- Culturally-sensitive assessments	0	2	1/6 (2)
- Other policy issues	0	0	
Extended School Year (guidelines, indicators, cost analysis, etc.)	0	1	2/6 (3)

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Finance			
- Issues re: funding formula used by SEA to provide funds to LEA incld. use of new flex. formula & use of $ as reward	1/2	2	3/6 (5)
- Alternative sources, i.e. SSI, Medicaid	0	2	1/6 (2)
- Financial issues re: inclusion/restructuring	1/1	2	1/6 (2)
- Funding for/costs of special services, i.e. mental health, EI, due process, corrections, etc.	0/2	0	2/6 (6)
- Other funding issues	0	3	2/6 (2)
IEPs (Individualized Education Programs) (process, evaluation, training, non-English, etc.)	1/2	2	4/6 (9)
Inclusion/Least Restrictive Environment			
- Definition of inclusion	0/1	1	0
- Model programs/guidelines/policy re: inclusion & LRE	2/2	1	4/6 (12)
- Effects of inclusion on student outcomes, costs, etc.	1/1	0	1/6 (1)
- Planning for future inclusive efforts	0	0	4/6 (5)
- Staff dev./training	0	0	5/6 (8)
- General information	0	1	2/6 (4)
Instruction			
- Issues re Braille & other instruction for VI pops	0	3	2/6 (2)
- Issues re: instruction of hearing imp./deaf pops	0	1	1/6 (2)
- Pre-referral/intervention strategies	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Reading materials	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Alternative ed. for corrections; homebound	0	1	1/6 (1)
- Peer tutoring	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Research on variables of effective instruction; class size	0	2	1/6 (3)
Interagency agreements/Collaboration			
- Benefits of service integration/ agreements	0	3	1/6 (1)
- Clarification of agency & SEA/LEA department roles & responsibilities.	0	0	3/6 (3)
- Models/guidelines/strategies for collaborat.	0	1	2/6 (3)
- Issues re: individual agencies & populations, ex. SED, mental health, corrections	0	0	3/6 (5)
Legislation/Legal Issues (info. on recent state/fed. legislation)	0	4	5/6 (6)
Outcomes/Accountability			
- Programs & practices for state accountability systems-standards & assessments for all students	1/2	0	4/6 (6)
- Evaluate systems re: effect on students w/disa.; grading	1/1	3	1/6 (1)
- Exit outcomes, ex. graduation, social compet.	2/2	0	0
Parent/Family Involvement			
- Parent training	0	1	1/6 (2)
- Staff development, training, networking	0	0	3/6 (3)
- Guidelines/strategies for parent involvement	0	0	4/6 (4)
- Issues re: state groups/t. forces involv. parents	0	0	3/6 (3)
Personnel/CSPD			
- Develop & implement state CSPD plan including inservice training personnel development	0	5	5/6 (13)
- Strategies to address supply/demand issues incld retention & recruitment	3/6	0	4/6 (6)
- Caseload issues	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Certification/endorsement & compet. standard issues incld highest standard	1/7	5	6/6 (7)
- Use of support/para. personnel	1/2	2	2/6 (5)
- Re/training for inclusive settings, incld training of regular ed. personnel	1/4	0	0
- Teacher prep & other personnel practices & issues	1/5	1	0

Procedural Safeguards			
- Mediation	0/1	0	5/6 (7)
- Forms, notices	0	0	1/6 (2)
- Section 504 requirements incld. students w/ADD	1/1	1	3/6 (8)
- ADA requirements incld. accessibility req.	0	1	2/6 (2)
- Issues re: hearing officers	0	1	2/6 (2)
- Parents' rights & surrogate parents training	0	1	2/6 (6)
- Other due process issues	0	4	2/6 (3)
- Miscellaneous	0	1	0
Reform/Restructuring			
- Effects/evaluation of ed. reform on students w/dis. & on SEA/LEA relationship	2/2	0	2/6 (2)
- Issues re: SEA structures & plans for sped reform	0/1	0	4/6 (8)
- Approaches, delivery systems, techniques for special ed. reform	1/4	0	4/6 (6)
- Training/networking	0/1	0	2/6 (2)
- Other reform issues	0	0	2/6 (2)
Related Services			
- Issues re: speech/lang. services	0	2	1/6 (1)
- Personnel training, certification, etc.	0	0	0
- Physical ed. services	0	0	1/6 (1)
- General issues re: related services including consulting services & transportation	0	3	2/6 (4)
Rules, Regulations			
- Reduction of rules, regs; reform-oriented changes	1/4	0	0
- Revision of SEA regs.	0	0	2/6 (5)
- Regs. re: exiting school	0/1	1	0
- Teacher/student ratio	0/1	0	0
- Issues re: Child count	0/3	0	1/6 (1)
- Issues re: Child find	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Data reporting & management	0	1	1/6 (1)
- Other	0	0	2/6 (2)
SEA Management/Policy			
- Issues re: SEA restruct., strategic planning, etc.	0	0	4/6 (13)
- Policy preparation & dissemination	0	1	3/6 (5)
- Networking w/ other SEAs, between SEA staff	0	0	3/6 (5)
- Issues re: management techniques, i.e. TQM	0	0	2/6 (2)
- Other	0	0	1/6 (2)
Separate State-run Schools (state residential schools, schools for blind/deaf pops)	0	1	3/6 (5)
Special Populations			
- Issues re: ADD	0/1	1	2/6 (3)
- Autism	0	1	3/6 (4)
- Hearing impairments/deaf	0	0	2/6 (2)
- Learning disabilities	0	0	1/6 (1)
- SED/BD	1/1	0	4/6 (8)
- Special health needs/chronic illness/med. frag.	1/3	1	2/6 (4)
- TBI	0	2	2/6 (3)
- Visual impairments/blind	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Residential pops.	0	1	1/6 (1)
- Incarcerated/adjudicated	0	1	0
- Substance abuse issues	0/3	0	0
- Rural populations	0	0	1/6 (1)
- Other	0	1	0
Staff Development (general staff development activities/ resources for SEA staff, incld. issues re: provision of TA to LEAs)	1/3	0	5/6 (16)
State Plan (issues re: development, revision & compliance of state plans)	0	0	3/6 (5)

Student Services (teacher support teams for pre-referral & staff assistance purposes)	0	2	2/6 (4)
Technology			
- Development of communication & info. management systems for use by SEAs	0/1	0	5/6 (7)
- Training re: methods, use of technologies	0	0	4/6 (4)
- Use of Distance Learning	0	0	1/6 (1)
Transition			
- Techniques, strategies for meeting transition requirements	1/1	0	4/6 (4)
- Issues re: program effectiveness/exit data	3/3	0	1/1 (1)
- Issues re: interagency collaboration re: trans.	0	0	3/6 (3)
- Training/networking	0	0	5/6 (11)

Table A.1 presents a summary of information needs from three sources. Information requests across 29 content area topics are further delineated by sub-topic in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the information needs of state directors of special education and other SEA personnel.

Columns (a), (b), and (c) within Table A.1 also show the extent of information needs of each topic area or of each sub-topic area across the three sources. The reporting of information needs from the **Critical Information Needs** sources in column (a) involves use of two numerals. The first numeral reflects the number of NASDSE-identified information needs as having high likelihood of need, as well as having a high impact on performance. The second numeral reflects the total number of needs in that topic or sub-topic area. Thus 2/4 indicates that four needs were identified in the topic or sub-topic area, but only two of the needs were rated by state directors of special education or other SEA staff as having both high likelihood of need and high impact on performance.

A review of information needs reported in the FORUM **Issues Tracking Database** for the period from July 1992 to October 1994 is found in column (b) of Table A.1. Information needs included in column (b) reflect the real or actual number of information requests made to FORUM regarding the specific topic or sub-topic area.

Finally, column (c) of Table A.1 provides information regarding the information needs as reflected in the **RRC Reports**. This column reflects the total number out of the six RRCs which documented at least one technical assistance agreement or information request on the specific topic or sub-topic. The numeral in parentheses reflects the total number of technical assistance agreements and information requests made regarding the particular topic or sub-topic during the last RRC reporting period. Thus, a notation of 4/6 (11) indicates that four of the six RRCs reported participating in a technical assistance agreement and/or responding to an information request regarding the topic or sub-topic area. Also, 11 total agreements and/or requests were made on this topic. This reporting format provides for a clearer understanding of the overall strength of the need, as well as the consistency of the need across RRC regions.